

Canadian LGBTQ+ Community and the COVID-19 Vaccine: Attitudes and Drivers

12 June 2021

Key Findings

- The LGBTQ+ population in Canada is **highly accepting** of the COVID-19 vaccine
 - Approximately **10%** of respondents were already vaccinated¹
 - **93%** of the remainder want to get the COVID-19 vaccine “**as soon as possible**”
- **Wanting to protect others** is the most important reason LGBTQ+ people have gotten or will get vaccinated
- **Previous bad experiences with the healthcare system** is an important driver for LGBTQ+ people who say they will wait to get vaccinated

Background

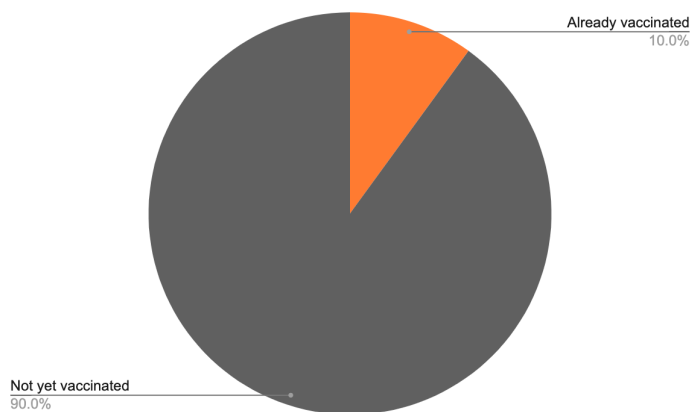
On March 31, 2021, the Tegan and Sara Foundation fielded an [online survey](#) using their social media platforms and email list (including sharing with more than 30 grantees of the Foundation and over 50 community influencers) to understand experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine within the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ Canadians are more likely to live in poverty and lack access to adequate medical care, paid medical leave, and basic necessities, and all of these issues have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

This document presents results of a Canada-focused analysis of the survey responses between March 31, 2021 and the closing of the survey on April 30, 2021. In that time frame, there were 7744 respondents, of whom **1493** provided a Canadian postal code and are included in the findings below. (The survey was open to all, regardless of location.)

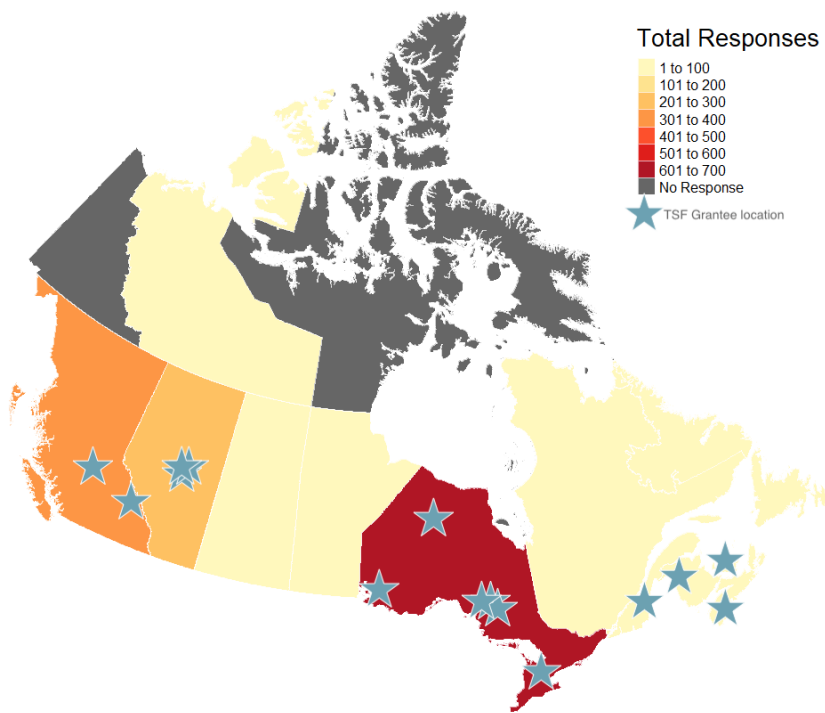
¹ “Already vaccinated” means answering ‘yes’ to the question “Have you received a COVID-19 vaccination?” No data are available on the time passed since vaccination or number of shots received.

Respondent demographics

Vaccination status



Respondent locations



89% (3142 of 3516) of respondents are members of the LGBTQ+ community².

<u>Sexual orientation³</u>		
	Respondents	% vaccinated ⁴
SEXUAL MINORITY ⁵	94% (n=1406)	13%
Asexual	6% (n=88)	17%
Bisexual and/or pansexual	34% (n=506)	9%
Gay and/or SGL	26% (n=286)	13%
Lesbian	32% (n=479)	14%
Queer	37% (n=546)	13%
A sexual orientation not listed ⁶	2% (n=29)	17%
Straight	5% (n=78)	21%

<u>Gender identity⁷</u>		
	Respondents	% vaccinated ⁸
GENDER MINORITY ⁹	33% (n=496)	12%
Nonbinary/ genderqueer ¹⁰	28% (n=413)	11%
Transgender	12% (n=179)	11%
A gender not listed ¹¹	3% (n=39)	15%
Cisgender	65% (n=977)	14%

² Defined as people who identified with any of the following: agender, asexual, bisexual, gay, genderqueer, lesbian, nonbinary, pansexual, queer, same-gender loving, transgender, two-spirit, "a sexual identity not listed," or "a gender not listed."

³ Respondents could check as many as applied to them.

⁴ As of the date the respondent completed the survey, which was fielded from March 31 - April 13, 2021.

⁵ Defined as people who identified with any of the following: asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, same-gender loving, "a sexual orientation not listed."

⁶ For example, polysexual, panromantic, demisexual, or fluid.

⁷ Respondents could check as many as applied to them.

⁸ As of the date the respondent completed the survey, which was fielded from March 31 - April 13, 2021.

⁹ Defined as people who identified with any of the following: agender, genderqueer, nonbinary, transgender, two-spirit, "a gender not listed."

¹⁰ Defined as people who identified with any of the following: agender, genderqueer, nonbinary, two-spirit.

¹¹ For example, demigirl, genderfluid, questioning.

<u>Race/ethnicity¹²</u>		
	Respondents	% vaccinated ¹³
PERSONS OF COLOR ¹⁴	17% (n=255)	16%
Asian/Pacific Islander ¹⁵	7% (n=98)	10%
Black, African American, or African	2% (n=33)	9%
Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish	3% (n=38)	8%
Indigenous American ¹⁶	5% (n=76)	30%
Middle Eastern or North African (MENA)	1% (n=21)	14%
White ¹⁷	87% (n=1299)	13%

<u>Age</u>		
	Respondents	% vaccinated ¹⁸
Under 18	3% (n=45)	0%
18-24	24% (n=359)	9%
25-34	38% (n=564)	11%
35-44	21% (n=310)	14%
45-54	9% (n=127)	17%
55-64	5% (n=68)	40%
65-74	1% (n=13)	38%
75+	0% (n=3)	100%

¹² Respondents could check as many as applied to them.

¹³ As of the date the respondent completed the survey, which was fielded from March 31 - April 13, 2021.

¹⁴ Defined as anyone who identified with any of the following: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black, African American, or African; Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish; Indigenous, First Nations, or Aboriginal; Middle Eastern or North African; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

¹⁵ Defined as people who identified with either Asian and/or Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander.

¹⁶ Defined as people who identified with either American Indian/Alaska Native and/or Indigenous/First Nations/Aboriginal.

¹⁷ Includes people who checked white both alone and in conjunction with other racial/ethnic identities.

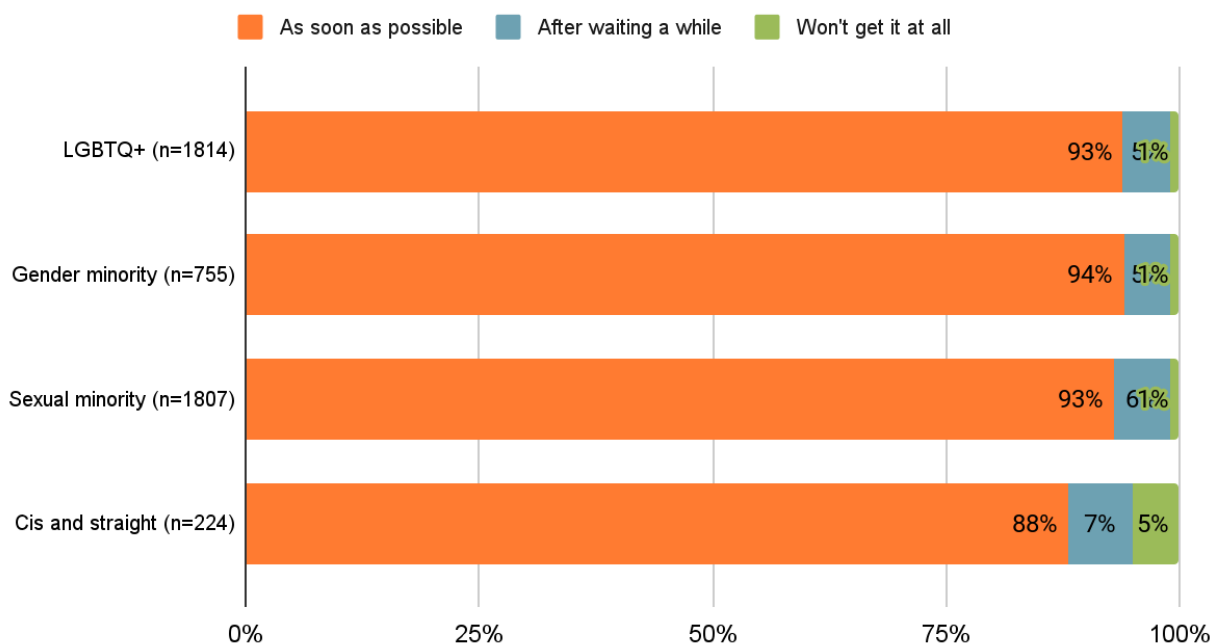
¹⁸ As of the date the respondent completed the survey, which was fielded from March 31 - April 13, 2021.

Findings

LGBTQ+ people want to get vaccinated

The vast majority of Canadian residents in this sample had not yet been vaccinated, but wanted to do so as soon as they were able. Only 1% of LGBTQ+ respondents say they won't get the vaccine at all. For comparison, an Abacus Data Poll of the general Canadian population shows that, as of May 12, 2021, that 71% have had at least one shot or will get one as soon as it's available to them, and 8% saying they will never be vaccinated.¹⁹ In our sample, the lowest proportion of people who said they would get the vaccine as soon as possible was among cis, straight respondents (67%); among LGBTQ+ people, responses did not differ markedly by gender or sexual orientation.

How soon will you get a COVID-19 vaccination?



Indigiqueers are on the road to vaccination

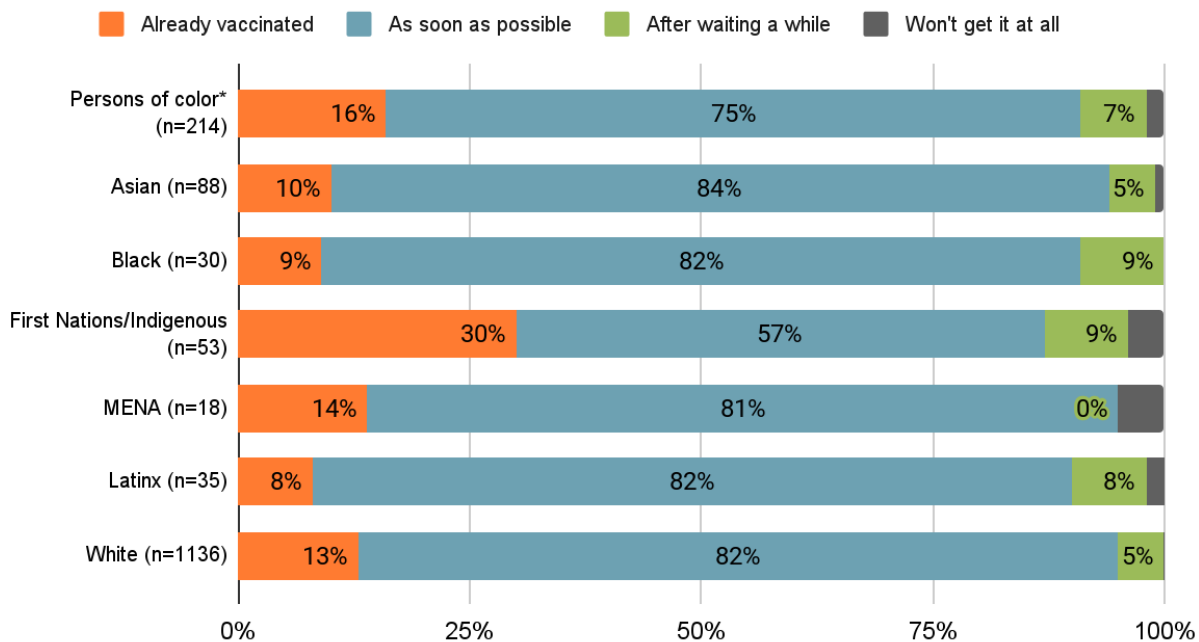
With one notable exception, we did not see significant differences in vaccination attitudes by race among Canadian respondents, although our sample was overwhelmingly white. However, the First Nations²⁰ community in our sample was far more likely than other groups to have already been vaccinated. It appears that,

¹⁹ Abacus Data. Vaccine acceptance is on the rise. Available at: <https://abacusdata.ca/vaccine-acceptance-on-the-rise/>

²⁰ For brevity, we will use First Nations to encompass all individuals who self-identified as either or both of American Indian/Alaska Native and/or Indigenous/First Nations/Aboriginal, while recognizing that this language does not fully encompass the lived experiences of all First Nations, Inuit and Métis people.

despite the historic and current racism experienced by First Nations peoples, the efforts to increase vaccination in Indigenous communities is paying dividends.

How soon will you get a COVID-19 vaccination?

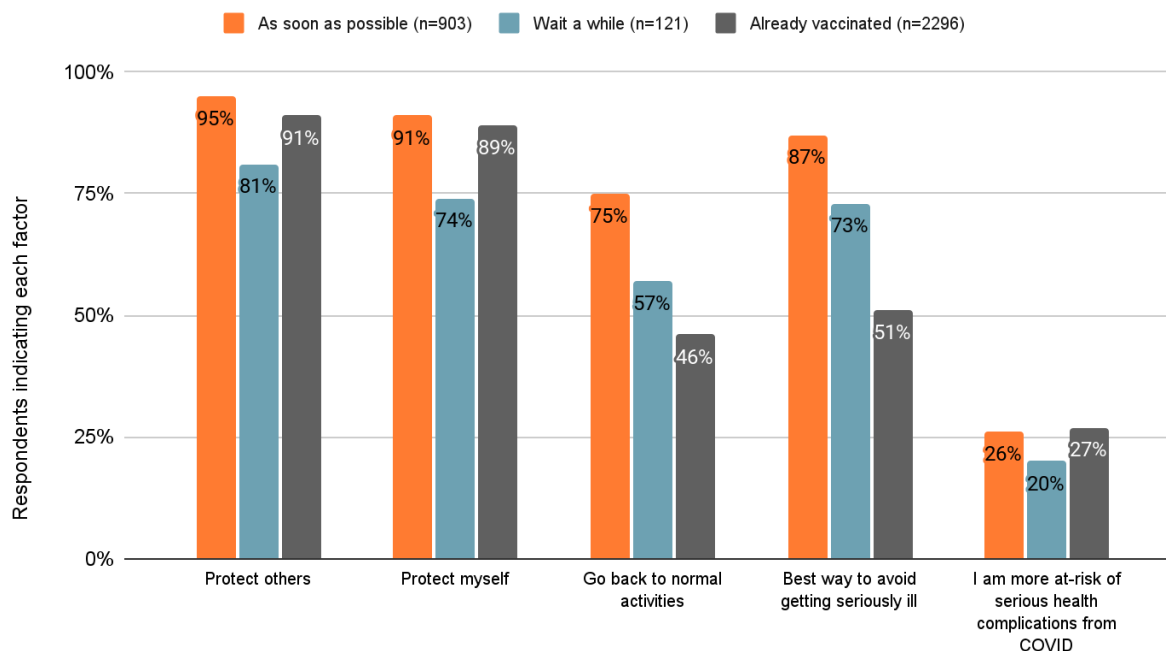


*"Persons of color" includes all people except those who only selected "white."

Protecting the community is the most important reason LGBTQ+ people have gotten or will get vaccinated

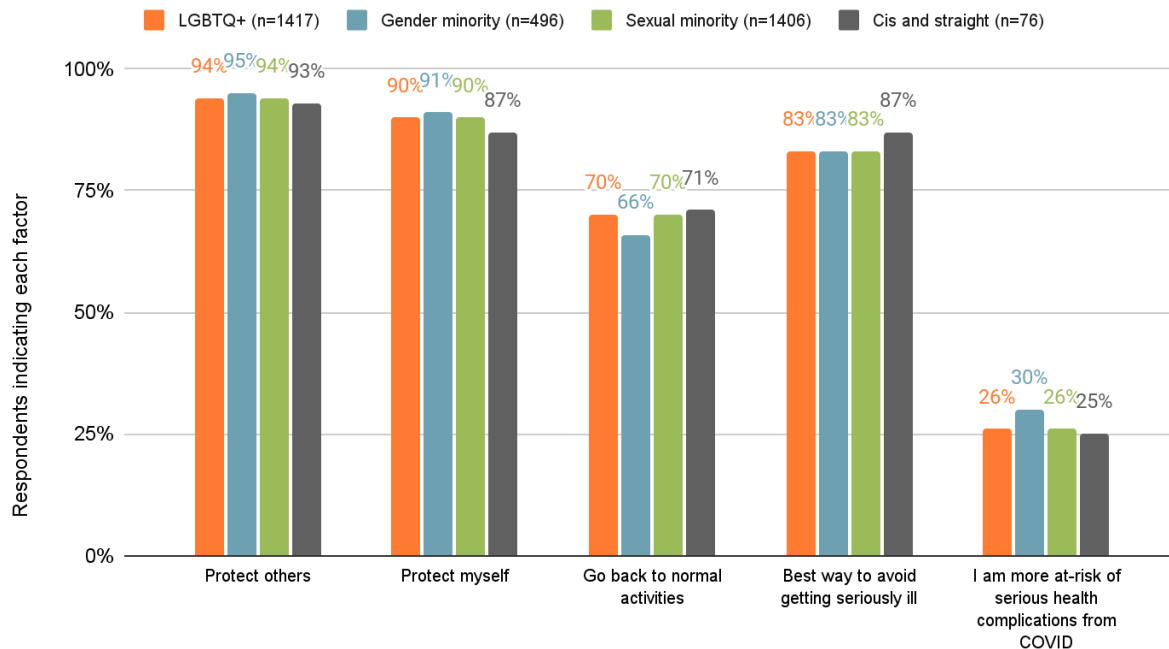
When asked why they got the COVID-19 vaccine, or will get the COVID-19 vaccine, a desire to protect others ranked highest among all groups. Among those who will wait to get vaccinated, there was a 7% difference between “I want to protect others” and “I want to protect myself” or “it is the best way to avoid getting seriously ill from the coronavirus,” which suggests that emphasizing the community-protection aspect of the vaccine should have the greatest impact on increasing vaccination levels. Returning to normalcy was a less important factor in respondents’ decisions to get vaccinated.

Why will you/did you get vaccinated?



Gender minority people were least likely to cite “going back to normal activities” as a factor in their decision to get vaccinated. This may reflect a sense that “normal” is not necessarily a positive thing for members of this community; a 2020 report from Trans PULSE Canada showed that most trans and non-binary people in Canada had experienced harassment related to their gender identity.²¹

Why will you/did you get vaccinated?



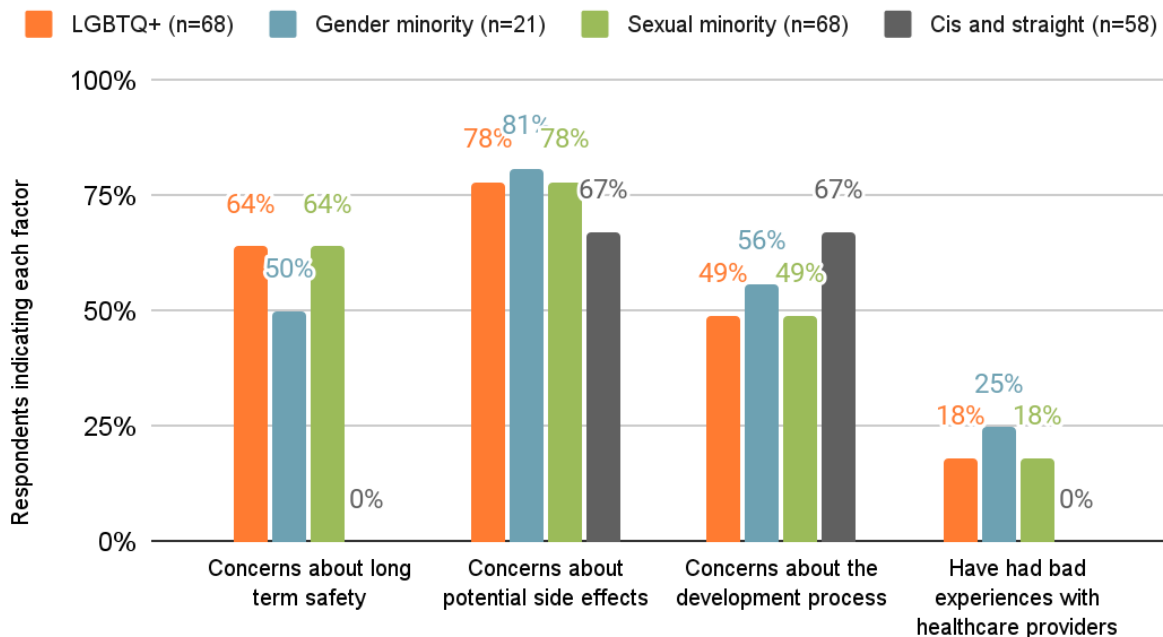
Reasons against vaccination are somewhat varied

When asked why they will wait to get vaccinated, or will choose not to get vaccinated, the top 2 concerns are broadly similar between LGBTQ+ people and cis, straight people, and between those who will wait and those who will choose not to get vaccinated. Many are concerned about long-term safety and potential side effects.

²¹ The Trans PULSE Canada Team. Health and health care access for trans and non-binary people in Canada. 2020-03-10. Available from: <https://transpulsecanada.ca/research-type/reports>

However, while LGBTQ+ people who will wait to get the vaccine have fewer concerns about the development process than cis, straight people, previous bad experiences with the health system are a more important factor among sexual and (particularly) gender minority people.

Why will you wait to get vaccinated?



Lower levels of healthcare utilization among LGBTQ+ people are well documented in other contexts²² and believed to be related to perceived and actual discrimination in healthcare settings²³; it is unsurprising to find similar phenomena at play as related to COVID-19 vaccination. These findings do suggest, however, a potential approach to encouraging timely vaccination among LGBTQ+ people: a decreased focus on the “medicalized” aspects of vaccination.

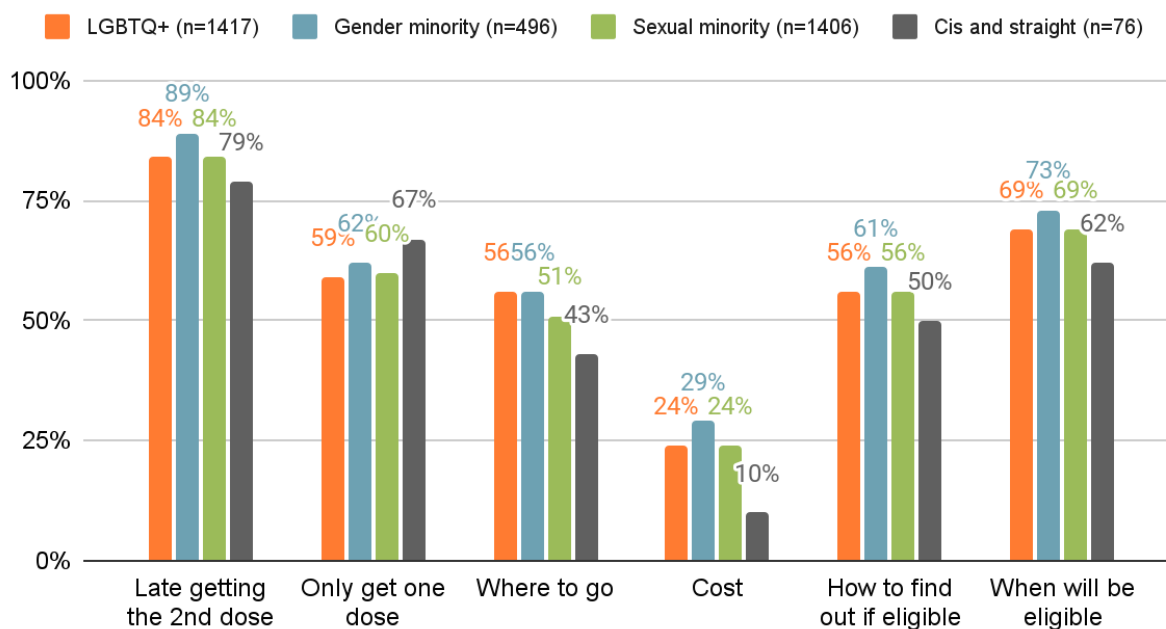
²² Tjepkema M. Health care use among gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadians. Statistics Canada: Health Reports. Vol 19, No 1. Available at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2008001/article/10532/5002598-eng.htm>

²³ Lambda Legal: When health care isn't caring: Lambda Legal's survey on discrimination against LGBT people and people living with HIV. 2010. Available at www.lambdalegal.org/sites/default/files/publications/downloads/whic-report_when-health-care-isnt-caring.pdf; Wilson PA, Yoshikawa H: Improving access to health care among African-American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations. In: Meyer IH, Northridge ME, eds. *The Health of Sexual Minorities*. New York: Springer US, 2007, pp 607-637.

Multiple aspects of COVID-19 vaccination remain unclear to all groups

Across all gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and age groups, many questions remain. More than 80% of LGBTQ+ people report being “very unclear” or “somewhat unclear” about what will happen if they are late getting the second dose of a 2-dose vaccine. More than half are unclear about the consequences of getting only a single dose of a 2-dose vaccine. Concerningly, 1 in 4 are not sure what the cost of getting a vaccine will be. And LGBTQ+ people are much more likely to be somewhat or very unclear where they will go to get the vaccine – potentially representing a desire to ensure their vaccination location is identity-affirming.

Aspects which are very unclear or somewhat unclear



Caveat

At the time this survey was fielded, COVID-19 vaccine eligibility was limited and highly varied around Canada. Further analysis should include a comparison of province-level eligibility for vaccination and the proportion of vaccinated respondents by age, gender, and sexual orientation, and how it changes over time as vaccination eligibility widens.

Summary and Recommendations

These data show that the most effective messaging is community-oriented: “*I want to protect my community*” was a more motivating factor in choosing to be vaccinated than “*I want to protect myself*.” And because bad previous experiences with the healthcare system are a substantial factor in some LGBTQ+ people’s decision to wait to get vaccinated, decreasing the emphasis on the medical nature of the vaccination process may prove influential.

Taken together, these findings suggest that one potential intervention to enhance vaccination rates among the LGBTQ+ population would be the creation of/highlighting of explicitly LGBTQ+-friendly vaccine sites, staffed to the degree possible with people presenting in non-medicalized ways. The LGBTQ+ community can [learn from the success](#) of the First Nations community in deploying trusted messengers who are members of the community to encourage vaccination.

Future Plans

We will make the de-identified data available to others who are interested for further study. To request a copy of this data set, please email info@teganandsarafoundation.org

A Note on Methodology

TSF prioritized community inclusion in the construction of this survey. Therefore, we chose not to ask “sex assigned at birth”; all demographic questions were “check all that apply”; and respondents could skip any question. Additionally, although this survey adhered to high ethical standards, it has not been reviewed by any institution’s Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Suggested Citation

Tegan and Sara Foundation. *Canadian LGBTQ+ Community and the COVID-19 Vaccine: Attitudes and Drivers*. June 2021.

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About Tegan and Sara Foundation and this project

The survey was developed by the [Tegan and Sara Foundation](#) in collaboration with health communications firm [Entrée Health](#) and reviewed by researchers at [SurveyMonkey](#), with contributions from physicians and researchers specializing in LGBTQ+ healthcare. The survey instrument can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/tsf-covid>.

About Tegan and Sara Foundation

Tegan and Sara Foundation (TSF) was founded in 2016 by Tegan and Sara to address inequalities faced by LGBTQ+ women. TSF's mission is improving the lives of LGBTQ+ women and girls. This mission is founded on a commitment to feminism and racial, social and gender justice. Learn more about TSF's work and flagship programming at the [OFFICIAL WEBSITE](#).

About Tegan and Sara

Tegan and Sara have openly identified as queer since the beginning of their career in 1998, and have been outspoken feminist advocates for LGBTQ+ equality and gender justice. The essential message that underpins their worldview and identity is inclusion. The Tegan and Sara Foundation is an extension of their work, identity and longstanding commitment to supporting and building progressive social change. As musicians, Tegan and Sara have sold more than one million albums, and have received seven Gold certifications, one Double Platinum certification, three Juno Awards, two Polaris Prize nominations, and a Grammy nomination. They have

performed on some of the world's biggest stages, from the 2015 Oscar Telecast to major festivals such as Coachella, Lollapalooza and Glastonbury.